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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH OSSETIA REOPENS ONE IRRIGATION CANAL

REF: TBILISI 01563

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) OSCE confirmed on July 2 that the South Ossetians have re-opened one of the two irrigation canals that bring water to Georgian farms both inside and outside the zone of conflict (reftel). The move came either during or after South Ossetian de-facto president Kokoiti's visit to Moscow, suggesting Russia was at least partially successful in pressuring Kokoiti to re-open the canals. OSCE Head of Mission Roy Reeve told us on Friday that the South Ossetians had opened both canals, but Deputy State Minister for Conflict Resolution Ruslan Abashidze insists that water is still not flowing through one of the canals. Georgian farmers have resumed their protest against the canal shutdown and have blocked the road leading to Ergneti to all traffic, including international donors and the OSCE.

[1](#)2. (C) The drinking water pipeline, which provides drinking water to both Georgian villages and Tskhinvali, is still operating below capacity. At a July 2 joint Steering Committee meeting to discuss joint monitoring and repair of the pipeline, the two sides failed agree on the starting point for the monitoring trip. The Georgians wanted to begin in the South Ossetian village of Java, while the South Ossetians insisted on starting in the Georgian village of Kheiti.

[1](#)3. (C) Shootings continued in South Ossetia over the weekend. The heaviest occurred near the Georgian village of Tamarasheni on Saturday, June 30, wounding one Georgian and two Ossetian civilians. OSCE confirmed that small arms and RPGs were used during the incident, but no mortars, which OSCE told us would be a sign of serious escalation. An OSCE monitoring group sent to investigate the situation also came under fire, but it did not appear that they were deliberately targeted. No one was hurt.

TEFFT